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Report of the Inspectors of Factories on the Effects of the Educational Provisions of the Factories' Act. By ALFRED A. FRY, Esq.

ON the 15th August of last year, the motion of Mr. Grote was acceded to without debate by the House of Commons,—“that Her Majesty would be graciously pleased to give directions, that each of the four Factory Inspectors do report separately, at the period of his Quarterly General Report, on the Effects of the Educational Provisions of the Factories' Act, as exemplified in not less than twelve of the schools situated in his district in which those provisions have been observed in the most efficient manner.” In pursuance of this resolution, separate Reports have been presented by the four Inspectors of Factories; and a joint Report by all, containing their united suggestions in reference to proposed alterations of the Act. Their reports were published by the House of Commons on the 20th February of the present year; and they present interesting matter in reference to the very important inquiry connected with the state of education in our great manufacturing districts. The result of the statements of the Inspectors is that, on the whole, considerable benefit is derived from the educational provisions of the Act; but that much greater advantages might follow if an improved system were adopted.

By the 18th section of the Factories' Act (3 and 4 Will. IV., c. 103), the Inspectors are required to enforce the attendance at school of children employed in factories, according to the Act, and to order vouchers of attendance to be kept in every school and factory.

By the 20th section, every child restricted to forty-eight hours of labor, in any one week, shall, while within the restricted age, attend some school, to be chosen by the parents, or by the Inspector in default of the appointment by the parents; and the Inspector may deduct from the weekly wages not more than 1d. in every shilling to pay for the schooling. And by the 21st section, it shall not be lawful to employ in any factory any child, restricted by the Act to forty-eight hours' labor in any one week, unless such child shall, on Monday in every week, give to the factory-master a voucher certifying that he or she has for two hours at least for six days out of the seven next preceding attended school, except in cases of sickness, or of absence from any cause allowed by the Inspector, or by any justice in his absence. By the 22nd section, whenever it shall appear to any Inspector that a new school is desirable, he is authorized to procure its establishment. And by the 23rd section, if any Inspector shall think any schoolmaster incompetent, he may disallow the order for any payment or salary to him.

Children in *silk* mills are not required to attend school; and factories used solely for the manufacture of *lace* do not come under the Act in any manner.

Mr. Horner observes in his Report, that “he trusts the education clauses will receive the special attention of Parliament, when the amending Act is brought forward; for the good they have already done in their present imperfect state, holds out great encouragement to persevere in making daily attendance at school an indispensable condition of the employment of children under thirteen years of age. The Factories' Act has assisted in exposing to public view the very low state of

this country in all that relates to the education of the laboring and indigent classes ; and if its educational provisions be made more effective, it may be the means of correcting that evil to a considerable extent."

The question of restricting the labor, and providing for the education of factory children, is at present under the consideration of the French government ; and in the State of Massachusetts, a law has been in force for nearly three years, which enacts that no child under the age of fifteen years shall be employed to labor in any manufacturing establishment, unless such child shall have attended some public or private day-school, where instruction is given by a teacher qualified by law, at least three out of the twelve months immediately preceding every year in which such child shall be employed. Thus while in this country the age at which children are exempted from compulsory attendance at school is thirteen, it is fixed in the principal manufacturing province of the United States at fifteen.

Mr. Horner states, that when the number of children is sufficient to provide by a moderate school-fee for the adequate remuneration of a good teacher, and when the mill-owner takes an interest in their education, schools will generally be established on the premises ; and this has already been done in many instances, and at the sole expense of the owner. But where the number is small, the education must be had out of the factory ; and here lies the difficulty of executing the Act, which requires education to be given, but does not provide suitable schools where none exist. The clause inserted for that purpose supplies no funds for their establishment, and however willing the parents may be to pay the weekly charge for their children's education, they are unable to unite to build and furnish a school.

Unless, therefore, good primary schools be established generally throughout the country, or unless schools be specially provided for factory children at the public expense, Mr. Horner considers that the educational provisions must continue to be inefficient in by far the greatest proportion of instances, except where good schools are voluntarily kept on their premises by the proprietors.

Mr. Horner furnishes a list of thirty factories within his district in which the educational provisions of the Act have been observed in the most efficient manner, the owners having taken pains to carry them into effect by establishing good schools on the premises, or availing themselves of the best in their neighbourhood. In others, the arrangements for the education of the children are in progress of improvement, and in many the children receive quite as much instruction as a large proportion of those attending common schools in the districts examined by the London and Manchester Statistical Societies.

Of the above thirty schools, all but one are in Lancashire. The number of children under thirteen contained in them is 1,820, of whom 1,115 are boys, and 705 are girls.

In 4 is taught reading only.

„ 7 are taught reading and writing.

„ 2 „ reading and sewing.

„ 4 „ reading, writing, and arithmetic.

„ 4 „ reading, writing, sewing and knitting.

„ 3 „ reading, writing, arithmetic, sewing and knitting.

„ 6 „ the same, together with geography, and, in one instance, singing.

In sixteen schools, containing 1,002 children, the school-fees are paid by the mill-owner, and the children receive instruction gratuitously. In three others the expenses are partly paid by the mill-owner, the children contributing only 1*d.* per week in two of them, and 2*d.* or 3*d.* per week in the other. In five other schools the children pay 2*d.* a week; in five 3*d.*; and in one 4*d.* Five of these schools have been established from four to five years, and consequently were in operation before the passing of the Factories' Act. In twenty-one instances the school is situated on the premises, and in nine it is not. The books generally in use are the Bible, Testament, Church Catechism, Hymns, Reading-made-easy, Spelling-books, Edinburgh Sessional, and Irish National School-books. In one school the History of England was used.

Mr. Howell, in his Report, observes, that "when the full term of eight hours' daily labor in the mill is exacted for the purpose of employing three children working eight hours each, upon what is termed the relay system, to do the work which would otherwise be performed by two persons working twelve hours each, it will be seen that it is impossible that the children so employed should be able to attend school daily at the hours, either in the forenoon or afternoon, at which ordinary schools are open. When, therefore, the master of a factory determines to avail himself in this manner of the full period allowed by law for the employment of children between 9 and 13 years of age, he must contrive to establish some kind of school which shall be accessible to his factory children at broken periods of the day, when ordinary schools are not available for them; and as the ordinary hours of common day-schools are not adapted to factory children working eight hours daily, so neither would the hours of a factory-school be suitable to children of any other class." Mr. Howell, therefore, in a subsequent part of his Report, concludes that "the real difficulty which embarrasses the educational provisions of the Factories' Act appears to lie in the attempt to combine good daily tuition in a school with eight hours' daily work in a factory."

But that this may be easily overcome in a well-regulated factory is proved by instances both in Mr. Horner's and Mr. Saunders's Reports. The latter gives an instance in which the children go to work in fourteen classes at different hours in the morning, forenoon, afternoon, and evening; and attend school in seven classes with perfect regularity. Among the 30 mills described by Mr. Horner, the children in 5 attend school in four sets, in 10 they attend in three sets, in 10 in two sets, and only in 3 in one set.

The Report of Mr. Saunders is very full and detailed. He arranges his observations under two heads, viz., 1st, the practicability of employing one set of children for a smaller number of hours than the older hands, and of combining education with this partial occupation of their time; and, 2ndly, the effect of the Educational Clause, as exemplified by the advantages derived from the system of obligatory education, as a condition on which the employment of children under 13 years of age in a factory can be obtained.

On the first head Mr. Saunders adduces instances of cotton, woollen, worsted, and flax mills, situated under four very different circumstances,

viz., large mills in towns, and the same in country places, also small mills in both situations, in all of which children under 13 years of age are employed by relays. He also brings forward the instance before quoted in which there are 14 classes, not as recommending the adoption of so many divisions, but in proof of what a reasonable degree of care and method can accomplish; and he arrives at the conclusion that it is perfectly practicable to unite factory labor and education during the first years in which children are employed in mills. This opinion is strengthened by the assurance of several mill-occupiers, that if the Factory Act were repealed, they would continue to work by relays and educate the children.

On the second head he observes, that "as the Educational Clauses were not virtually in operation until June, 1836, few persons can as yet have received the four years' education contemplated that they should hereafter have when they enter a factory at 9 years old."

Still the effects of those clauses are already perceptible; and the general testimony of the mill-owners, their overlookers, and the parents of the children, is, that the scholars become more tractable and better behaved, while their moral habits are improved. Many of the mill-owners now approve of education who formerly deemed the application of it almost impossible, and not likely to be in the least degree beneficial. The following statements, from the Report of Mr. Baker, one of the Superintendents of Factories, are highly interesting, as shewing the contrast between the education in mills in which the schools are altogether inefficient, and others in which the attention of the parochial clergy and resident gentry has effected a partial improvement through good Sunday-schools; and, also between those in which the daily education is good. The first refers to the Pudsey district, which is stated to afford a fair example of the real condition of the clothing districts in regard to education. In 18 mills there are employed 325 children under 13, and 295 between 13 and 18 years of age. The following are the respective degrees of instruction possessed by each class:—

	Under 13.	Between 13 & 18.	Total.	Per-Centage Proportion.
Can read the Testament . .	51	83	134	21·6
,, Spelling-book . .	74	44	118	19·
,, Primer . .	108	93	201	32·4
,, Alphabet . .	45	44	89	14·4
Cannot read	47	31	78	12·6
	<hr/> 325	<hr/> 295	<hr/> 620	<hr/> 100·

Thus out of 620 persons, of whom 295 are above 13 years of age, 486, or 78 per cent., cannot read the Testament. Of the total number, only 59, or 9 per cent., attend Sunday-schools.

Where, however, the clergy or gentry have exerted themselves to improve the moral and intellectual condition of the operatives, a different result is manifest; although, as the following table will show, a state of great mental neglect is everywhere general. In 49 mills within a short distance from Leeds, in a locality both manufacturing and rural, there are 1,584 persons under 18 years of age, of whom 439 are under 13. Adopting the same test as before,—

	Under 13.	Between 13 & 18.	Total.	Per-Centage Proportion.
Can read the Testament	169	615	784	49·4
„ Spelling-book	86	268	354	22·4
„ Primer	126	223	349	22·
„ Alphabet	32	39	71	4·5
Cannot read	26	..	26	1·7
	439	1,145	1,584	100·

Of these, 873, or more than one-half, attend Sunday schools; but even here the proportion of those who cannot read the Testament is 50 per cent., although the proportion of the wholly ignorant, and of those beginning to spell, is reduced from 27 to 6 per cent.

The advantage of a good systematic factory education, where the value of intellectual culture is understood and applied, and where the mill-owner is desirous of improving the moral and social condition of his work-people, is shewn in the following account of Messrs. Marshalls' mill at Holbeck, where no expense is spared to secure to the operatives the opportunity of obtaining a good education. The number of hands employed under 18 years of age is 888, of whom, however, only 287 come under the educational clauses. The amount of instruction which they possess is as follows:—

	Under 13.	Between 13 and 18.	Total.	Per-Centage Proportion.
Can write.	328	328	..
Can read the Testament	164	266	430	48·4
„ Spelling-book	65	135	200	22·5
„ Primer	54	121	175	19·7
„ Alphabet	4	36	40	4·5
Cannot read	43	43	4·9
	287	601	888	100·

Of the above number, 752, or five-sixths, attend a Sunday school; nearly one-half of all the hands under 18 are able to read the Testament; but of those under 13, who come within the operation of the Act, 57 per cent. can read the Testament, and the remainder are much further advanced than in the schools previously noticed.

Again, in 13 mills at Leeds and Bradford, where the schools are on the premises, and are conducted on good systems, the following progress has been made: the number of children under 13 years of age employed is 487, of whom some have been in attendance in the mills and schools for three years, and one or more only for one day. The condition of the same children when they entered the mill, and when the Report was made, is thus contrasted:—

	On coming to the Mill.	At the present Time.
Could read the Testament	147	296
„ Spelling-book	116	149
„ Primer	121	37
„ Alphabet	91	7
Could not read	16	1

Thus 60 per cent., or three-fifths of the children under 13, could read the Testament fluently. But the mere reading of the Testament is nothing, unless they understand what they read, and unless the

effect is perceptible in the improvement of their moral condition. In the mills last described, and in those conducted on the same good system, the children do seem to understand what they read; while, in those previously described, they can hardly reply to any question, or interpret any word required of them.

It appears, therefore, that the educational clauses have been already productive of some advantages to the factory youth, and are susceptible of much greater. So far from their being a hindrance to the mill-owner, they are a benefit in well-conducted factories, by establishing a spirit of subordination and regularity which did not previously exist, and by securing the attendance of respectable and decent children, whose parents prefer the mills in which there are well-conducted schools. It is to be regretted, that the advantages thus obtained by the children under 13 years of age are not in some way continued till they are 18 or 20 years old; and though many of them attend Sunday schools after the age of 13, yet it is to be feared that frequently the instruction obtained while they are compelled to attend daily at school, may altogether, or in a great measure, be lost. Messrs. Strutt, of Belper, to remedy this defect, compel all the young persons they employ to attend a Sunday school, until they are 20 years of age; and such improvement has generally been made, that most of the clerks and overlookers in their several establishments have belonged to this class.

It might be feared that the adoption of strict regulations, and a systematic control over the conduct of the operatives in a factory, might deter persons from entering such establishments; but so far is this from being the case, that Messrs. Shelton, of Leeds, in whose mill very stringent rules are observed, state that "they have never experienced any difficulty in getting work-people, on account of the nature of their regulations; but, on the contrary, they assert, without hesitation, that these have been found by them conducive to their best interests; that at different times they have had applications for employment from individuals who were desirous of the benefit of being obliged to conform to their rules, in order that they might be assisted in their endeavours to reclaim themselves from vicious habits; and they have had instances in which the parties were formerly incorrect in their conduct, but have been entirely changed, and are now steady orderly men."

The testimony of Archdeacon Lyall to the good influence of a well-conducted factory upon the surrounding population is very valuable. Speaking of Messrs. Brown's silk mill, at Hadleigh, in which very strict regulations are maintained by a committee, independent of the proprietor, he states "that nothing can be more satisfactory than the conduct of the children, who amount to between 300 and 400. I do not remember that a single complaint has been preferred against a factory girl for the last six months. Their progress in the school is also satisfactory (they are divided into four classes); the girls read one day, and are taught to sew another, as also to knit, &c. Instead of causing immorality or disorder in the town, the factory, under these simple regulations (the existence of which is sufficient, for a case seldom occurs for exercising them), has been a greater blessing to the town than I can express. When I came to Hadleigh, five years ago, it had the reputation of being the most turbulent and disorderly place in this part of

Suffolk. At present there is not a quieter town in England; and I attribute this, in a very considerable degree, to the factory." The Archdeacon further says, that "under ordinary circumstances any factory in which children only are employed, might be rendered not merely a place from which immorality and vice might be excluded, but a more efficient school of religious and useful habits than any mere educational seminary could possibly be."

One great obstacle to the improvement of the system of education, not only in factories but in the country generally, is the want of good schoolmasters. To this point both Mr. Horner and Mr. Saunders call attention: the former states that "it is not at all an unusual thing to have certificates presented to us subscribed by the teacher with his or her *mark*: this generally happens in the case of female teachers; but they are held to be equal in qualification to the majority of those who keep 'dame schools.' In the last quarter I had a school-voucher presented to me with a '*mark*,' and when I called on the schoolmaster to read it before me, he could not. It had been written out by the clerk of the factory, and the schoolmaster had been called to put his mark to it. I have had to reject the school-voucher of the fireman, the children having been schooled in the coal-hole (in one case I actually found them there), and having been made to say a lesson, from books nearly as black as the fuel, in the interval between his feeding and stirring the fire of the engine-boiler. It may be supposed that such a thing could only happen at the mill of some poor ignorant man; but that, I am sorry to say, was not the case, for it occurred at factories where a large capital must be embarked."

Mr. Baker quotes several instances of the incapacity of the teachers, of which the two following certificates afford a specimen:—

1. "This to certify that 1838 thomas Cordingley as atend martha insep school tow hours per day January 6."

2. "Sir. The reason P. Harrison left me I suppose to be his objection to pay my demands, as he left me in arrears. Elizth Northern has not and will not pay me a penny ever since she came to me; her plea is that you stop it out of her wage.—If you please Sir, If you plase Fairplay's a Jewel. "*E. Hinchcliffe.*"

Mr. Baker adds, "Factory-schools are of many kinds, from the coal-hole of the engine-house to the highest grade of infant education. The engine-man, the slubber, the burler, the book-keeper, the overlooker, the wife of any one of these, the small shopkeeper, or the next-door neighbour, with six or seven small children on the floor and in her lap, are by turns found 'teaching the young idea how to shoot,' in and about their several places of occupation for the two hours required by the law. Few, how few, good schools are here and there bestowing upon so important a community as the manufacturing classes the benefits of a national system of education and of moral training, to fit them for their future station, and impress them with its relative duties! I do not think that, among the 500 mills under my superintendence in the West Riding of Yorkshire, I should be able to name a dozen schools where the education is systematically good, and the mill-owner personally cognizant of the progress of his children, although in between 300 and 400 of these mills short-time children are made use of. In all the rest, that

which is called education may be given, or may not. The amount per week is paid for it, in nine cases out of ten, by the master; and the certificate testifies that each child has attended two hours per day, in conformity with the enactment."

Mr. Saunders, judging from the replies sent to him by various mill-owners and schoolmasters, in answer to circulars issued to them by him, and more especially by the reports of his three intelligent superintendents, Mr. Bury, Mr. Baker, and Mr. Bates, arrives at the conclusion that considerable good has been effected, but "*that whatever benefits may have been derived, are very trifling as compared with what might be effected under an improved system*, which shall facilitate and encourage the establishment of good district schools under efficient teachers, especially if some reasonable and satisfactory plan could be adopted to increase the opportunity for young persons between 13 and 18 attending evening schools for one hour."*

The last Report proceeds from Mr. Stuart, the Inspector for Scotland and Ireland; and he remarks that those countries stand on a different footing to England in respect to the provisions now in question: for that in Glasgow, Paisley, Aberdeen, and Belfast, mill-owners have no difficulty in procuring a sufficient number of young persons above 13 years of age; and accordingly, so few are employed under that age, that no school has been established under the Act in any town within his district. And in Ireland the number of young persons above 13 years old is so great, that factory owners hardly at all employ children not more than 13 years of age. "It is, therefore," Mr. Stuart says, "almost exclusively at country factories in Scotland, where a considerable number of workers is employed, that schools connected with the factories are to be found in my district." He then specifically details the operations in the various mills within his district under the Act, deducing the conclusion that "the educational provisions are there in due observance, but that their effect is limited," from the circumstances above referred to. "At most of the large country factories in Scotland schools had, previously to the passing of the Act, been esta-

* The Statistical Society of Manchester, in their valuable Report on the State of Education in Liverpool (in 1835-36) state the same results as observable there. "In their Report on the State of Education in Manchester, the Committee came to the conclusion that the vast majority of the children who attend the dame-schools receive no instruction which is at all deserving of the name; and that of the children who attend the common day-schools, the greater part receive an extremely poor education. They came to a nearly similar conclusion in the case of Salford; and they might now, with equal truth, apply nearly the same words to the same two classes of schools in the borough of Liverpool. Of the proximate causes of the inefficiency of this class of schools, those which appear to the Committee to be most prominent, are, first, the want of adequate means for their support; and, secondly, the non-existence of a class of capable and willing teachers, who take an interest in their occupation: and the Committee would here observe, that each of these causes in some degree re-acts upon the other; that the want of funds is one, although not the only, cause of the want of proper teachers; and that the general incompetency of the teachers, and the consequent inferior quality of the instruction given, is in many cases a reason why the parents will not consent to make a greater pecuniary sacrifice to have their children educated." Similar instances of the ignorance of the teachers are then detailed as those stated by Mr. Baker; and in the Report on the State of Education in Bolton (1837) the Society have to present the same lamentable facts.

blished by the factory owners and occupiers; the only effect of the educational provisions of the Act having been to insure the regular weekly attendance of the children for the statutory period; and at the smaller country factories good schools connected with them have been set a-going since the passing of the Act, which the children attend for the statutory period. Reading, writing, arithmetic, and geography are taught at all these schools by well-qualified persons; and, at many of them connected with the large factories, the proficiency of the children is remarkable." There seems no fault to find here; and it would be well if the manufacturing districts in England could be put upon an equality in this important respect with Scotland.

The Inspectors then present a joint Report in pursuance of the second part of the resolution moved by Mr. Grote,—that they should jointly report as to any modification of the existing educational provisions which may appear to them desirable.

The Inspectors accordingly unite in several suggestions which will receive the attention of Parliament; as that the parents should not have the complete power (as at present) of selecting the school; that the Inspectors should be able to enforce payment, out of the wages, of not more than 3*d.* per week for schooling; that holidays should be allowed every Saturday; that the form of granting a license for absence from school should be abolished; and that the master should not be compelled (as now) immediately to discharge a child who has neglected attendance at school, which has often the effect of inconveniencing the master and punishing him for the fault of the child. These are mere matters of detail; but the concluding suggestions refer to topics of great interest and importance: and we cordially concur in the desires expressed by the intelligent and experienced Inspectors.

Several mill-occupiers in the districts of Mr. Horner and Mr. Saunders have expressed a willingness to unite in the support of a school in a central position, which may be used in common by the children employed in several neighbouring factories; and it has been urged that there is a great probability that some such schools would be speedily brought into operation, more especially should the assistance of Government hereafter mentioned be obtained, if it were enacted that it shall be lawful for any number of persons to agree with each other for the establishment of a school for the use of the children employed in factories, and to make rules for the management and for defraying the charges thereof, and to insert in their agreement penalties for the breach of conditions therein, and that the penalties may be recovered and applied as other penalties under the Act.

We venture farther to suggest, "that wherever it shall appear to any Inspector that a new or additional school is necessary or desirable, to enable the children employed in any factory to obtain the education required by this Act, it shall be lawful for the Lords Commissioners of Her Majesty's Treasury to appropriate such sum as may appear to them necessary for the building, enlarging, or otherwise establishing such schools out of any money which may have been granted by Parliament for promoting education, under such securities for the public interest, and under such restrictions, as their lordships may consider the circumstances of the case to require."